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REMARKS

The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the final rejection dated June 7, 2005.

Claims 12-22 remain pending.

Claims 12-18, 21, 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by "Aoki et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,421,675)" (sic, Aoki et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,078,913) (Aoki). The Applicants traverse as follows.

In rejecting Claim 12 over Aoki, the Examiner finds the claimed user's evaluation input step in a purported user selection of a desired document by using a bookmark, citing Column 6, lines 35-51 of the patent. The Examiner also asserts that Aoki teaches that a user's evaluation of a document is input by designating a document retrieved in a document search conducted pursuant to a search condition, citing the frequency table of keywords in Column 6, lines 1-51 (particularly lines 1-6).

Respectfully, the Applicants submit that the Examiner misunderstands either the claimed step or the disclosure of Aoki. According to the claimed step, now more particularly characterized by clarifying amendments, the step inputs a user's evaluation of a document retrieved in a document search conducted pursuant to a search query, the evaluation including

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an evaluation as to whether the document is desirable for the user's search purpose. Thus, the user determines whether the document is desirable, and this determination, or evaluation, is input according to the step.

On the other hand, Column 6, lines 35-51 of Aoki does not disclose or relate to a user's evaluation of a document. Rather, the paragraph spanning lines 35-51 describes that a user information database includes, for each user, a plurality of URLs and Bookmarks which interest the user, and that a newly-found document indicated by the specific URLs and Bookmarks is updated and posted to the specific user. Therefore, while the Bookmarks reflect the interest of the user, the document is found and posted by the search system. The user does not perform an evaluation; rather, the system shows the document to the user as being of potential interest.

The remainder of Column 6, between lines 1 and 51 describes fundamental features of the cluster database 122. The database includes a frequency table of keywords listing keywords for weighting documents based on degree of similarity. A user identifier list stores user identifiers to be posted when documents positioned in a lower layer of a current node are individually updated. A pointer indicates the parent node and the child node to implement the clustering

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of documents in a hierarchical tree structure. As discussed above, the user information database 21 stores original information for each user, including URLs and Bookmarks which interest the user.

Therefore, Column 6, lines 1-51 does not support the assertion that Aoki teaches a step for inputting a user's evaluation of a document by designating a document retrieved in a document search conducted pursuant to a search condition.

Claim 12 further recites a search query storage step for, when updating the search query based on the evaluation, storing a search query after the update in association with the retrieval operation thereof. Against this feature of the invention, the Examiner cites Aoki at Column 5, lines 62-67 and Column 7, line 36. The passage in Column 5, however, merely notes cluster database 122, including a plurality of node information elements N which form nodal points of hierarchical tree structure. Aoki teaches that the Node information elements N each contain a frequency table 12 and contents for each node, a user identifier list, and pointers indicating parent and child nodes. These features have been discussed above. None of these features, however, refer to search queries.

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Similarly, Column 7, line 36 discloses that any update of a document x is posted to the user corresponding to the user identifier in the user identifier list in the node information element Nx, such that all users interested in the document can be informed of the update of the document x. Again, there is no suggestion of a user evaluation; rather, Aoki "pushes" a document of potential interest to the user based on stored similarities of other documents. Therefore, Aoki does not teach or fairly suggest a search query storage step for storing a search query after an update based on a user's evaluation.

Claim 12 further recites a storage result stored step for storing a search result based on the search query after the update in addition to search results that have been stored in previous retrieval operations conducted before the update. The claimed search history storage step stores information on the history of the search queries in each stored in the search query storage step, information on a history of search results each stored in the search results step, and each user evaluation and identifier of documents subjected to the evaluations by making a correspondence among the search query, the search result, the user's evaluation, and the identifier of the document subjected to the user's evaluation.

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The Examiner refers to Column 5, lines 13-34 of Aoki to support the rejection of these features. This passage, however, simply introduces the hardware and software structure of Aoki, and fails to indicate user's evaluations, identifiers of documents subjected to user's evaluations, or any correspondence or value ascribed among the search query, search result, user's evaluation, and identifier of documents subjected to the user's evaluation.

In summary, Aoki is, respectfully, only marginally relevant to the invention claimed in Claim 12, and cannot support a patentability rejection under §102.

By similar argument, the system of independent Claim 21 and the computer-readable recording medium of independent Claim 22 are patentable over Aoki.

In light of the foregoing arguments regarding the independent claims, the patentability of dependent Claims 13-18 should be evident. In particular, because Aoki does not disclose a user evaluation as set forth in the claims, all claims relying on such an evaluation are necessarily distinguishable from Aoki.

Claims 19-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Aoki in view of Diamond et al., U.S. 6,269,368 (Diamond). Diamond, however, teaches that

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individual scores are combined to obtain a score of a search result document. Diamond does not disclose the input of a user's evaluation of a document retrieved as a result of a search. Thus, even in combination with Aoki, Diamond does not render obvious the invention claimed in Claims 19-20.

In summary, the present invention, as claimed in Claims 12-22, is patentable over Aoki, whether taken individually or in combination with Diamond. More particularly, whereas the invention is directed to a document retrieval process performed a plurality of times by the user, Aoki's process is a recursive retrieval process performed on a tree structure by the system. In the inventive process, the retrieval process is conducted with a search query updated by the user so as to obtain a more desirable search report, but the Aoki process is performed to add documents of potential interest for review by the user.

Aoki does not disclose a user's evaluation as a feature of the process or system disclosed in the patent, whereas in the present invention, the user's evaluation is integral to the document retrieval.

In Acki, keywords are indexed for comparison with newlydiscovered documents, to determine whether the documents might be of potential interest to the user, whereas in the

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invention, search queries and updates thereof based on user's evaluation constitute stored information used in the document retrieval process. Thus, whereas Aoki updates by adding documents and modifying indexed contents thereof, the invention is directed to updating search queries based on a user's evaluation.

Ultimately, Aoki links together similar documents using nodes, whereas the present invention utilizes search queries and updates thereof based on user's evaluations, managed as history information, to improve the document retrieval results. As an advantage of this feature of the invention, the search history can be re-entered or re-used at a selected point in time to optimize the document retrieval.

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In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks the Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the claims.

Respectfully submitted,

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